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In Memory of Adam Thornton

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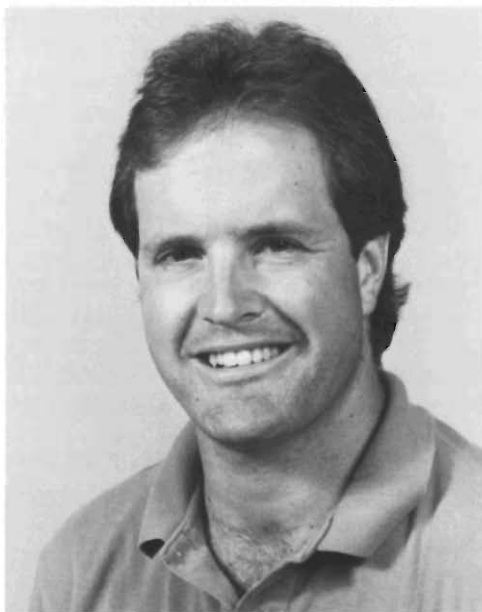
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BMC

Adam Murray McVickar Thornton, a sophomore veterinary medicine student at Iowa State University, died of cancer Thursday, March 21, 1991 at 4:55 a.m.

Adam was born in West Chatham, Massachusetts on April 27, 1958. Adam spent most of the last fourteen years in Iowa. Adam left Massachusetts in 1977 to attend Grinnell College, where he graduated with a degree in urban planning in 1981. He met his wife, LuAnne, at Grinnell, and they were married in 1984.

In 1985, Adam came to ISU to pursue his degree in Animal Science. He enrolled in the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1989. Adam is survived by his wife, LuAnne Thornton, his father, George Thorton, his mother, Grace McVickar, his stepfather, Vern McVickar, his sister, Nancy Steele and his beloved dog, "Effy."

An endowment fund will be established for a student pursuing veterinary medicine at Iowa State University in the name of Adam Thornton at Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa. A memorial service and a tree dedication were held at the College of Veterinary Medicine on March 29, 1991. Speakers were Dr. Ron Myers, Dr. Don Draper, Dean Prince, Rose Davidson, and Dr. Joseph Haynes.

The following is an excerpt from Laurie McCabe, VM III who served as Adam's sophomore contact when he began vet school.

"To the people who did not know Adam Thornton, the information above is just that, infor-

mation. There was so much more to him than what is listed here. He was many things to many people -- a loving husband, an active classmate, a good and enthusiastic student, but most of all he was a caring and wonderful friend.

I first had contact with Adam when his name was given to me as part of the program designed to help freshmen acclimate to vet school. He called me from Massachusetts in August, 1989, just before he was to begin vet school. The thing I remember most about that first encounter was how enthused he was about vet school and especially about life in general. When I finally met him in person in September, 1989, I only liked him more. I remember commenting to one of my classmates, how lucky I was to have received the best freshman in the whole class. My opinion of Adam has only grown stronger with time.

Adam was very active in extracurricular activities in his few years at ISU College of Veterinary Medicine. He served as secretary for SCAVMA in 1990, was on the ISU Veterinarian Staff, and was on the SCAVMA Environmental Committee. Even after he was diagnosed as having cancer, he would still go to the SCAVMA executive meetings and also help collect the pop cans throughout the school for the environmental committee.

Though Adam's classmates, especially Rose Davidson and Dean Prince, had the opportunity to know Adam better than myself, he and I shared a lot of good times together. The one thing I

remember, besides what a warm, fun and thoughtful person he was, was his fluorescent lime green backpack. You could see him for miles away! I used to tease him that I needed sunglasses because it hurt my eyes to look at it as he walked down the hallway.

When we all learned that he had cancer, it was absolutely devastating. What would we say? What would he look like? How were we to act? But, Adam, as was his way, made it easy on everyone. He would start the conversation before you could get out the word 'hello'. He wanted to talk of vet school, friends, activities, and jobs, not about cancer and what lay ahead for Lu and him. I saw him two weeks before he died and he was saying 'it's a long road back.' That was Adam, always offering hope and helping us through. LuAnne and he were an inspiration to us all. The night before he died, some of us sat with LuAnne and Adam. It was so hard to see him like that, but now he is no longer suffering and is at peace. I have cried many tears, since that fateful day in October when he was first diagnosed, and I will continue to cry for many days to come. He was a very special friend to me, one I knew I would hold onto forever. Though he is gone, he has touched many of our lives and for that we have been enriched. Our hearts will always have a special place for him, so he will be with us now and for all time. We miss you, Adam, and we will never forget you."

The next portion of this article is by Rose Davidson, VM II and is taken from the thoughts she shared at Adam's memorial service.

"We come to vet school to learn how to become veterinarians and of course, at the same time, we come to know each other as friends. Some, we come to know as very close, lifelong friends, while others we know just as we pass them in the hallways. We take it for granted that we will see each other tomorrow, because we are with one another in every class, every day, and time just goes on -- until one of us is gone, and then we realize that the old cliché, 'Life is fragile, life is short,' is very true.

Adam was one of the first people I became good friends with here. We met in Dr. Myers' Problem Based Learning class in the fall of 1989. I knew that Adam was a unique, special person from the beginning. His wonderful sense of humor came through in that first class when he said that he was the oldest person there, next to Dr. Myers, that was.

Adam lived each day as if life was fragile and short! He brought out the best in other people and tried to rule out the bad. To me, Adam's motto was, 'If you don't have anything good to say, then don't say anything.'

Adam's enthusiasm for life was evident when he would come to school and be soaking wet. People would ask him if he had just taken a shower or if it was raining out. No, he had just ridden his bike to school and he put the most he had into it. He could ride forty miles on his bike, he was the picture of health.

There were certain days, those days that there was a test back in our mailboxes, that Adam perhaps, did not look as forward to. Adam would leave his tests in his mailbox for days, then he would put it in his backpack (limegreen one, remember) and not even look at them for weeks. We would bribe him, offer to look at them and to tell him if they were okay, but he never went for that.

Adam worked in the teaching hospital throughout undergrad, working his way up from the kennels to working at the front desk while he was in vet school. Adam knew this place well, so in the wee hours of the night when we were stressed to the maximum, Adam would say, 'let's take a break.' (He said this on a regular basis). So we would go down to the barns and see C.W. and Bud, and whoever else we could find. Before we knew it an hour would be gone, then Adam would get just a little frustrated, especially if it was just hours before the test. But we never quit visiting the barn, we had too much fun and actually, we would come across things going on down there, that we would learn so much from. Of course, we always said we would start studying earlier and we made plans to just go over each day's notes five to ten minutes per day. We never followed through with those plans.

After meeting all of Adam's family out on the Cape, when Dean and I went out there for the service, we could see from the environment Adam grew up in, why he was the person he was. Adam was a reflection of his parents. The place he grew up in is beautiful and the home he grew up in is peaceful and loving. There were always animals around, too. There were dogs, ducks, rabbits, and more.

I had the privilege of taking Adam's folks through the vet school several weeks ago, they were very impressed. Vern, Adam's Dad, who has been in landscaping all his life, said that he

was really impressed and so glad he got to see this aspect of Adam's life. He commented, though, that there needs to be more greenery, so now the dedication of Adam's tree will add some, as it grows for years and years.

I had a good talk with Adam before he last went into the hospital in February. He told me he was never going to give up hope. I said yes, I knew that and so did everyone who saw him come to school when he was so sick. I told him how everyone was amazed at his courage and perseverance. He said he felt that this was still something he could give. That was Adam, always giving.

Adam never did give up hope, not even to his very last breath, it was just that his body could not

keep up with his spirit. His spirit will live on in our hearts and he will keep us laughing and keep us persevering throughout our lives. I can hear him always saying, 'It's okay, we will get through this...'"

Adam was loved and respected by his family, his classmates, and his friends because of his genuine concern for people and for animals. His last caring act was a donation of his corneas.

Adam underwent several months of intensive treatment in Iowa and Tennessee. His courage and will to live during these difficult months will be remembered by all.

I Have A Friend Called Adam*

I have a friend called Adam.
He is young and strong and handsome.
I know his smile is genuine,
I know his handshake is firm,
His hug is genuine.

I know he cares for animals,
I know he shares their pain and joy.

I know he feels the joy of a fast bike
And the thrill of a steep hill.

I know he laughs
And lets his friends join in his laughter.

I know he bothers to lend a hand when others won't,
I know he gives when others can't,
I know he cares when others don't.

Most of all, I know he loves LuAnne,
And Effy is his friend and companion.
I know this love knows no bounds.

Sadly, I know Adam is not here to dry my tears.
But that does not change in the least that
I have a friend named Adam.

*Written for Laurie McCabe and Adam Thornton
by Kevin McCabe, D.C., Laurie McCabe's husband.



Kevin McCabe, D.C.